

June 2011

DOH 331-187
(Revised)

Follow-up to an unsatisfactory routine coliform sample

A drinking water sample is unsatisfactory whenever coliform bacteria are present. If your water system receives unsatisfactory sample results, you must collect a set of repeat samples. If your water system uses groundwater, you must also collect triggered source samples from any groundwater source in use when you collected the unsatisfactory routine sample. You must collect triggered source samples before treatment. If your water system has an approved triggered monitoring plan, follow your plan.

Repeat samples confirm the presence or absence of coliform bacteria in the system. If present, the samples indicate possible causes of contamination.

Triggered source samples indicate whether the groundwater source is contaminated with a fecal indicator such as *E. coli* bacteria.

You must collect repeat and triggered source samples within 24 hours after you learn about the unsatisfactory routine sample result. Unless you have prior approval from us, **do not** shock-chlorinate the system or source before collecting any samples.

Thoroughly inspect the water system

Try to identify potential sources of contamination, such as “openings” in the system or treatment equipment failure. For help see *Troubleshooting Checklist for Coliform Contamination* (331-180).* If you find obvious sources of contamination, call us (see Page 2).

Review your sampling procedure

Review your sampling procedure to make sure you collect your samples correctly. For help, see *Coliform Sampling Procedure* (331-225).*

Collect repeat samples

If you collected ONE routine sample this month, you *must* collect **FOUR REPEAT** samples. Three must come from the following locations:

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within five active connections upstream from the original unsatisfactory sample location.
3. An active service within five active connections downstream from the original unsatisfactory sample location.

If all of your water supply is from a **surface water source**, you must collect your fourth sample from the distribution system.

If any or all of your water supply comes from a **groundwater source**, you decide whether to take the fourth sample from the distribution system or the groundwater source.

Unchlorinated systems that choose to collect this repeat from a groundwater source may count this sample as a repeat and a triggered source sample. This option is limited to one source. You should collect a raw water sample from any additional sources in use when you collected the unsatisfactory routine sample.

Chlorinated systems should collect this repeat from the distribution system. You also must collect a raw water sample from every source in use when you collected the unsatisfactory routine sample.

If you collected TWO or MORE routine samples this month, you *must* collect THREE REPEAT samples.

1. The same tap as the original unsatisfactory routine sample.
2. An active service within five active connections upstream from the original unsatisfactory sample location.
3. An active service within five active connections downstream from the original unsatisfactory sample location.

You must also collect a raw water sample from each groundwater source in use when you collected the unsatisfactory routine sample.

The month after an unsatisfactory sample

The month after an unsatisfactory routine sample, you must collect at least FIVE ROUTINE samples from the distribution system. You must mark these samples “Routine” on the lab slips submitted with the samples. If you usually take five or more routine samples each month, follow your regular schedule.

If any of these samples are unsatisfactory, we require further investigation, repeat samples, and triggered source samples.

Call us if:

- You cannot sample as outlined above.
- You would like to discuss the triggered source sample requirement.
- Any repeat samples or triggered source samples are unsatisfactory.

Northwest Region: Kent
(253) 395-6750

Southwest Region: Tumwater
(360) 236-3030

Eastern Region: Spokane Valley
(509) 329-2100

* Our publications are online at <http://www4.doh.wa.gov/dw/publications/publications.cfm>

